

DATELINE #84 NEW YORK
ROBERT L. REDEEN

MAY 26, 1976

GREEN THUMBS IN NEW YORK
(VOICED PIECE, INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: AND NOW THE VOICE OF AMERICA PRESENTS DATELINE, PEOPLE,
PLACES AND EVENTS IN THE UNITED STATES. TODAY, VOA
CORRESPONDENT ROBERT L. REDEEN TAKES US DOWN ON THE
FARM... IN NEW YORK CITY.

VOICE: MERVYN PARRIS, A COLLEGE STUDENT ADDICTED TO FRESH
VEGETABLES, OFTEN CARRIES BOXES OF FRESH HORSE MANURE
ON THE BUS THAT TAKES HIM HOME TO THE BEDFORD-STUYVESANT
SECTION OF BROOKLYN. HE SPREADS IT ON THE VEGETABLE
GARDENS GROWING IN BOTH THE FRONT AND REAR YARDS OF
HIS PARENTS' BROWNSTONE HOUSE. HE SAYS, "NOW I GROW
FOOD THAT'S BETTER THAN WHAT YOU CAN BUY IN THE GROCERY
STORE. IT'S FRESHER; IT DOESN'T HAVE A LOT OF CHEMICALS
IN IT, AND IT TASTES BETTER."

SANDRA ALCOSSER IS, A POETRY THERAPIST AT A MENTAL HEALTH
CENTER. SHE LIVES WITH HER HUSBAND ON THE TWENTIETH
STORY OF A MANHATTAN APARTMENT BUILDING. IN A TINY
TERRACE WITH SOUTHERN EXPOSURE MRS. ALCOSSER GROWS
SPINACH, CABBAGE, LETTUCE, EGGPLANT, TOMATOES, FOUR
KINDS OF PEPPERS, CUCUMBERS, SQUASH, CARROTS, ONIONS,
GARLIC, ORANGES, RADISHES, AND GARDEN CRESS. MUCH
OF THE PRODUCE IS GROWN IN FISH PACKING CRATES WHICH
SHE GETS FREE AT THE NEARBY FULTON FISH MARKET.

VOICE: SOME NEW YORKERS ALSO GARDEN ON THEIR ROOFS AND THEIR
(CONT) WINDOWSILLS. HERBS GROW IN SMALL POTS, BEAN SPROUTS IN
TINY PIE TINS.

AND CITY YOUNGSTERS WHO THINK THEY WOULD ENJOY
GARDENING CAN FIND OUT IF THEY REALLY DO FROM JOHN
ALBERT, WHO INSTRUCTS A GROUP OF SOME TWO HUNDRED AT THE
NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDENS IN THE BRONX.

TAPE: CUT ONE -- ALBERT

"WE HAVE A PROGRAM WHERE CHILDREN FROM THE CITY TEN
YEARS OLD THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL CAN COME AND GROW
VEGETABLES ON THEIR OWN PLOT. THEY'RE TAUGHT EXACTLY
HOW TO DO IT. IT'S AN EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE. AND AT
THE SAME TIME THEY'RE ABLE TO FEEL THAT THEY POSSESS A
LITTLE GARDEN OF THEIR OWN FROM WHICH THEY CAN TAKE
HOME ALL THE HARVEST."

VOICE: SEVERAL OF ALBERT'S YOUNG FARMERS FROM NEW YORK CITY ARE
NOW ATTENDING AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES TRAINING THEM TO
MAKE FARMING THEIR LIFE'S WORK. ONE OF THE THINGS THEY
LEARNED FROM ALBERT, WHO SPENT THREE YEARS WITH THE PEACE
CORPS IN AFRICA, IS THAT WEEDS AND HEALTHY PLANTS DON'T
MIX.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- ALBERT

0
P
T
"NOBODY LIKES TO WEED. AND IT'S A VITAL PART OF GARDENING,
WEEDS, GETTING THE WEEDS OUT. BECAUSE THE WEEDS HAVE A
GREATER ABILITY TO TAKE UP NUTRIENTS AND WATER THAN
MOST VEGETABLES AND THEREFORE IF YOU HAVE THE WEEDS,
THE NUTRIENTS THAT YOU APPLY TO THE SOIL AND THE WATER
ARE GOING TO BE CONSUMED FIRST BY THE WEEDS AND THE
PLANTS WILL SUFFER. ALSO, WEEDS OFTEN CARRY DISEASES.
THEY ARE HOST PLANTS TO MANY DISEASES, VIRUSES THAT
CAN BE TRANSFERRED TO YOUR PLANTS."

VOICE: COMMUNITY GROUPS ARE ALSO BECOMING FARMERS IN NEW YORK. ONE ORGANIZATION THAT GOT INVOLVED THREE YEARS AGO IN PLANTING CROPS ON VACANT LOTS IS KNOWN AS THE GREEN GUERRILLAS. JEFF DELAY, ONE OF TWO PRESIDENTS OF THE GUERRILLAS, EXPLAINS WHAT THEY DO.

TAPE: CUT THREE -- DELAY

"WE OFFER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, FREE PLANT MATERIAL, WHEN WE CAN GET FREE PLANT MATERIAL, AND ENERGY TO COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS THAT CONTACT US WHICH HAVE NOTICED A VACANT LOT IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD."

VOICE: AT LAST COUNT, SAID MR. DELAY, THERE WERE ABOUT A HUNDRED AND TWENTY GROUPS THE GREEN GUERRILLAS WAS HELPING.

THE NEW YORK CITY REAL ESTATE DEPARTMENT ESTIMATES THERE ARE MORE THAN TWENTY-EIGHT THOUSAND PIECES OF VACANT PROPERTY THE CITY CONTROLS AND WHICH AFTER PROPER NEGOTIATION JUST MIGHT BE AVAILABLE FOR FARMING. ONE COMMUNITY GARDEN IN MANHATTAN IS KNOWN AS RUPPERT GREEN AFTER A BREWERY THAT USED TO STAND NEARBY. AN ARCHITECT NAMED GRAHAM MACKENZIE GORDAN STARTED IT FIVE YEARS AGO. IT'S HALF A CITY BLOCK IN SIZE. ABOUT NINETY NEARBY RESIDENTS FARM SMALL PLOTS THERE NOW, AND THEY EACH TAKE HOME ABOUT THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS WORTH OF VEGETABLES DURING THE YEAR.

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- GORDON

"FOR SOME PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY OF THE GARDEN, THE GARDEN HAS BECOME THE FOREMOST ELEMENT IN THEIR LIVES. IT'S THEIR PLACE, THEIR BACKYARD."

VOICE: THERE ARE VARIED REASONS FOR FARMING IN THE CITY. FRESHER FOOD, EXERCISE, GETTING TO KNOW ONE'S NEIGHBORS, BEATING THE HIGH PRICE OF STORE-BOUGHT VEGETABLES.

AND ALTHOUGH NOT EVERYBODY CARRIES BOXES OF FERTILIZER ON THE BUS -- AS MERVYN PARRIS DOES -- THE EVIDENCE DOES POINT TO THE GROWING POPULARITY OF PART-TIME FARMING IN NEW YORK CITY.

ANNCR: DOWN ON THE FARMS...IN NEW YORK CITY. YOU'VE BEEN LISTENING TO DATELINE...STORIES OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS IN THE UNITED STATES. JOIN US AGAIN NEXT _____ (AT THIS TIME) FOR ANOTHER...DATELINE.

#

#

#

WJL/PY